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PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

IN RE:
U.S. Patent Application 10/681,484, filed 10/8/03
Applicant: Andrew M. Kvalheim
For: ARTICLE FEEDER
Art Unit: 3654
Examiner: Kumar, Rakesh

Attorney's Docket: K - 9
CUSTOMER NO. 27304

Commissioner for Patents
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DECLARATION OF GARY ROUTH

I, Gary Routh, residing at 119 Sharpless Drive, Elkton, MD 21921, declares as follows:

1. Background

I have been an employee of Kval, Inc., the assignee of the above-identified patent application and a manufacturer of door unit fabrication systems, including automatic screw feeders for door hinging. I have been employed for many years with Kval in various capacities relating to the operation, servicing and sales of such machinery and component parts thereof and I currently act as Sales Representative for Kval for the Northeastern and Southeastern United States. This experience includes participation in the design, sales and servicing of reciprocating screw feeders utilized in the door unit fabricating systems.

2. Quick Screw Change Hopper

I am familiar with the Quick Screw Change hopper of the present patent application in which the collating slots in the hopper or container have been extended to the collating end (release end) of the hopper. A gate is provided at the rear end. The upper part of the gate closes off the container to maintain the loose screws in the container during normal operation of the hopper. The lower margin of the gate closes off the ends of the collating slots as this is also necessary for operation of the hopper. For changeover to new screws, the hopper may be stopped with the rear or release end at its lowered position and the gate opened. This opens the ends of the collating slots to the exterior of the container so that the screws in the slots slide out of the container along with the loose screws held in the container.

3. Prior Art Hopper Design

All prior models of reciprocating of screw hoppers (feeders) of which I am aware have been generally of the type illustrated in U.S. Patent 5,425,473 in which collating slots are permanently sealed off from the container exterior and no provision has been made for automatic release of screws for changeover. In the past, changeover has required manual intervention by the operator to remove the loose screws and to disengage and lift the collated screws from the slots. The Six-Shooter Hopper manufactured by Kval, Inc. is a screw feeder of this type.

4. The Quick Screw Change Hopper

The Quick Screw Change hopper is also now being manufactured by Kval, Inc. and incorporated in Kval's various types of door and jamb processing machines manufactured and sold by Kval, including the Kval 990F-3, 990F-4 and 990 FX. Customers are given the choice of incorporating either the Quick Screw Change Hopper or the Six-Shooter Hopper. The 990 F-3 and 990F-4 each require one screw feeder and the 990FX requires three along the machine, each of which feeds screws to a respective hinger at that respective site. On a screw changeover with this machine the screws must first be removed from all three of these hoppers.

5. Sale of Hoppers installed on Door and Jamb Processing Machines and for Retrofit

Door and Jamb Processing Machines are all sold by Kval with the hoppers installed, at an installed price. However, those that are sold with Quick Screw Change Hopper have a purchase price premium of $12,550 per hopper over the price of the same machine with Six-Shooter Hoppers installed.

Since the introduction of the Quick Screw Change hopper in 2004, out of the ~~17~~ 14 GTR 990F-3 Machines sold, Quick Screw Change Hoppers were selected for ~~14~~ 11 of GTR them. Of the 37 990F-4 machines that were sold, Quick Screw Change Hoppers have been selected for all but 3 of them. For 990FX Machines, each of which require three hoppers, all 7 sold had Quick Screw Change Hoppers.

The 990F-3 machines were sold with hopper at a price each of $200,000. The sales price for each of the 990F-4 machines was on the same basis for a price of $280,000. The 990FX machines each sold at a price of $268,000.

In addition, since 2004, 11 Quick Screw Change Hoppers have been sold for retrofit into existing customer machines, each at a price of $23, 000. Since the retrofit hoppers replaced existing operational prior art hoppers this evidences a customer recognized value of the quick change function of this invention equivalent to or exceeding the full purchase price of the hopper itself.

I state under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Gary T Routh

Gary Routh

Executed this 22 day of February 2007